Introduction

Mercultures II

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Shima's first themed issue on mermaids, mermen and similar figures, notions of the aquapelagic imaginary and what the issue referred to as broader 'mercultures' was published in October 2018 (as v12 n2). It contained 16 articles that addressed aspects of visual and narrative media, tourism, folklore and philosophy that subsequently formed the core of an anthology of mermaid themed articles published on the *Shima* website in 2020 (to which the material in this theme issue will also be added). Continuing interest in the topic amongst contributors led to the decision to plan a related theme section in a subsequent issue but responses to a call for papers on the topic exceeded expectations and secured 29 proposals and 22 submissions, 16 of which were accepted by reviewers and now comprise this second mercultures themed issue. In addition to general submissions by individual scholars, Simon Young's early presentation of an ambitious and comprehensive survey of mermaid place names and folklore in the United Kingdom (Young, 2021a) resulted in four related articles being commissioned on mermaid and siren place names in the West Indies, Canada, the USA and Australia (Young 2021b; Hayward, 2021; Allan, 2021; Fleury and Hayward 2021, respectively) and a response from Nash (2021) on related toponymic issues. This suite of 6 articles constitutes the first comprehensive study of international mermaid place names and is likely to be the standard reference on the topic for the foreseeable future. *Shima* would also welcome submissions from researchers from non-anglophone countries on the connection between local names for mermaids and related creatures and place designations.

One welcome aspect of general submissions for this issue was the number that focused on African, Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean mermaids, 3 of which were accepted for publication (Braun, 2021; Davis, 2021; Sparkes, 2021). Again, the journal would welcome further submissions on this subject. Other material included in the issue addresses mermaids' presence in western popular culture (Scribner 2021a, 2021b), literature (Alder, 2021; Jilkén, 2021; Mitchell, 2021); audiovisual media (Mini, 2021) and corporate branding (Mitchell, 2021). Inkol's artist note and creative video work, *The Mystery of Melusine*, explore aspects of melusine/mermaid myths through audiovisual poetry and narration.

Reflecting a broader interest in various types of maritime creature folk- and media-lore within Island and Maritime Studies, v16 n2 (October 2022) is a theme issue on aquatic mythologies and monstrosities that is being guest edited by historian Dr Polina Ignatova from Lancaster University (UK).

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